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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - SECRETARY RICE TO MOSCOW

EU-AMERICAN RELATIONS: THE CASE OF ROMANIA

PARIS - THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- 1. SECRETARY RICE TO MOSCOW
- 2. EU-AMERICAN RELATIONS: THE CASE OF ROMANIA

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE POINT DEVOTES A SHORT COLUMN, TITLED "A COUSIN FROM AMERICA," TO CRAIG STAPLETON, PRESIDENT BUSH'S CHOICE FOR AMBASSADOR TO PARIS. HELENE VISSIÈRE WRITES: "IF HE IS CONFIRMED, STAPLETON WILL HAVE THE DIFFICULT TASK OF APPEASING FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN RATHER STORMY SINCE THE WAR IN IRAQ. HIS STYLE WILL NOT NECESSARILY HELP HIM. BEFORE LEAVING PRAGUE HE WAS ASKED WHAT ADVICE HE HAD FOR HIS SUCCESSOR: 'DO NOT TAKE KID GLOVES. AMERICAN AMBASSADORS DO THINGS THAT WOULD NEVER OCCUR TO CAREER DIPLOMATS.'"

A WIDE VARIETY OF STORIES ARE FEATURED ON TODAY'S FRONT PAGES. THE NEW POPE CONTINUES TO ELICIT INTEREST AND COMMENTARIES, WITH RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO DEVOTING FIVE PAGES AND ITS EDITORIAL, TITLED, "BENEDICT THE EUROPEAN" TO HIS DOCTRINE AND WORLD REACTION TO HIS ELECTION.

THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION AND FRANCE'S REFERENDUM ARE ALSO A LEAD STORY, WITH POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE PARISIEN HEADLINING: "YES, THE 'YES' CAN STILL WIN." THE STORY IS LINKED TO A POLL CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF THE PAPER BY THE CSA POLLING INSTITUTE AFTER PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S CONTROVERSIAL TELEVISED SHOW. IT INDICATES THAT ALTHOUGH THE 'NO' IS STILL IN THE LEAD WITH 52 PERCENT, IT HAS LOST 4 PERCENTAGE POINTS, AND THE 'YES,' GAINING 4 PERCENTAGE POINTS, IS UP TO 48 PERCENT.

SEVERAL COMMENTARIES ARE DEVOTED TO PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S ROLE IN TRIGGERING THIS NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE REFERENDUM. IN LE POINT, COLUMNIST NICOLAS BAVAREZ WRITES: "THE FEAR OF CHANGE EXPRESSED BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE (PARTICIPATING IN THE TELEVISED SHOW) IS A DIRECT PRODUCT OF CHIRAC'S DEMAGOGUERY. HE HAS TRAPPED HIMSELF; IN DENOUNCING THE CHIMERA OF AN 'ULTRA-LIBERAL, ANGLO-SAXON AND ATLANTICIST EUROPE' HE HAS FED THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE 'NO.' THE TRUTH IS THAT THERE IS A MAJORITY EXPRESSING ITSELF AGAINST CHIRAC, AND EUROPE HAS BECOME AN UNFORTUNATE COLLATERAL DAMAGE."

SECRETARY RICE'S VISIT TO MOSCOW IS REPORTED, ALBEIT NOT

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EXTENSIVELY. HER CRITICISM OF PUTIN IS NOTED IN LIBERATION, WHILE POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR REPORTS ON THE "KREMLIN'S FEAR OF TOO MANY REBELLIONS AT ITS DOOR." (SEE PART C)

IRAQ AND THE DISCOVERY OF 57 BODIES ARE WIDELY REPORTED. LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION SUGGESTS THIS COULD REOPEN THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE UNCONFIRMED SHIITE HOSTAGES IN MADAEN.

SEVERAL OUTLETS REPORT MOUSSAOUI'S DECISION TO PLEAD GUILTY IN CONNECTION WITH HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE 9/11 ATTACKS. IN POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE PARISIEN THOMAS CANTALOUBE ASKS: "IS MOUSSAOUI SANE? BY ACCEPTING HIS REQUEST, JUDGE BRINKEMA APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED THAT HE UNDERSTANDS HIS RIGHTS AND THE RISKS HE IS TAKING, TWO NECESSARY CONDITIONS TO BE ABLE TO PLEAD GUILTY. BUT OTHERS SUGGEST THAT MOUSSAOUI HAS ALREADY PROVEN TO BE UNSTABLE., 'A CONDITION THAT MAY HAVE BEEN MADE WORSE BECAUSE OF HIS ISOLATION,' SAYS LAW PROFESSOR ROGER WILLIAMS."

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO DEVOTES A REPORT TO AN ALLEGED CONTROVERSY BETWEEN PARIS AND BUCHAREST AND THE ROLE WASHINGTON IS PLAYING WITH EUROPE'S NEW MEMBERS. (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

SECRETARY RICE TO MOSCOW

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"A SPREAD OF REVOLUTIONS ON RUSSIA'S DOORSTEP." THOMAS DE ROCHECHOURT IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR (04/21): "ON A VISIT TO MOSCOW, CONDOLEEZZA RICE DID NOT SPARE PUTIN, WHEN SHE SAID THAT 'AMERICA WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE RUSSIAN PRESS'S LACK OF INDEPENDENCE.' ALTHOUGH SHE CAME OFFICIALLY TO 'RE-ENFORCE THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH RUSSIA,' CONDOLEEZZA RICE, WHO IS ALTERNATIVELY CALLED THE 'BLACK PANTHER' OR THE 'STEEL MAGNOLIA,' HAS PROVEN ONCE AGAIN TO WHAT EXTENT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KREMLIN AND THE WHITE HOUSE ARE DETERIORATING. MOSCOW IS HOLDING WASHINGTON RESPONSIBLE FOR RECENT 'DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONS' AT ITS DOORSTEP. AND IS AFRAID THAT IT IS THE TARGET OF A PROCESS AIMING TO TOPPLE PUTIN'S REGIME AND REPLACE IT WITH ONE THAT WOULD BE MORE FAVORABLE TO WASHINGTON. THE RUSSIANS FEAR A SPREAD OF DEMOCRACY AT HOME ON THE HEELS OF REVOLUTIONS SUCH AS THE ONE IN KIRGHIZSTAN."

"WASHINGTON WATCHING OVER PUTIN"

LORRAINE MILLOT IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (04/21): "SECRETARY OF STATE RICE DID NOT WEAR KID GLOVES WHEN SHE MADE ACERBIC REMARKS ON THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA. WASHINGTON WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY TO INSURE THAT PUTIN LEAVES THE KREMLIN IN 2008, AS DEFINED BY THE CONSTITUTION."

EU-AMERICAN RELATIONS: THE CASE OF ROMANIA

"THE U.S. HAMPERS RELATIONS BETWEEN BUCHAREST AND PARIS" ARIELLE THEDREL IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/21): "ON MONDAY ROMANIA WILL SIGN ITS EU MEMBERSHIP TREATY. THE NEW ROMANIAN PRESIDENT, WHO IS QUITE UPFRONT ABOUT HIS ATTRACTION TO THE U.S., HAS ELICITED SOME ANNOYANCE FROM OTHER EU MEMBERS WITH HIS MENTION OF A 'BUCHAREST-LONDON-WASHINGTON AXIS.' AFTER HAVING HELPED BUCHAREST IN ITS EFFORTS TO JOIN THE EU, FRANCE IS NOT HAPPY TO HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT IN THE COLD. FM BARNIER HAS ALREADY SAID THAT BASESCU DOES NOT PROVE TO HAVE A 'EUROPEAN REFLEX' AND THAT HE CONFUSES 'ALLIANCE' WITH 'ALLEGIANCE' TO THE AMERICANS. THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENT HAS RESPONDED BY SAYING IN RECENT INTERVIEWS THAT HE 'DOES NOT APPRECIATE RECEIVING SUCH LESSONS.' ON HIS VISIT TO PARIS ON TUESDAY THE ROMANIAN EU MINISTER WAS ASKED BY HIS FRENCH COUNTERPART TO DENY SUCH COMMENTS, WHICH HE IMMEDIATELY DID. WHAT LIES BEHIND THIS QUARREL? THE TRUTH IS THAT THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENT WANTS HIS COUNTRY TO BECOME A REGIONAL POWER AND IS COUNTING ON THE AMERICANS FOR THIS. THE COMPLEX GAME BETWEEN THE U.S. AND RUSSIA IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ROMANIA. AS A NATO MEMBER, IT IS READY TO WELCOME U.S. BASES. AND HAS OFFERED TO EXPAND NATO'S 'ACTIVE ENDEAVOR' OPERATION TO THE BLACK SEA, WHICH FRANCE AND TURKEY OPPOSE. THE GUAM SUMMIT COULD HELP THAT DORMANT ORGANIZATION TO COME BACK TO LIFE THANKS TO THE AMERICANS, WHO, TO COUNTER RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE, WANT TO TURN THE GUAM INTO A SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION ORGANIZATION FAVORABLE TO THE WEST. ROMANIA, AN OBSERVER AT THE SUMMIT, COULD FIND A ROLE TO FIT ITS AMBITIONS." WOLFF